DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 370 CE 081 314

AUTHOR	Andrews, David
TITLE	Implications of Connexions for Careers Education and Guidance in Schools. Report of a NICEC/CRAC Invitational Policy Consultation Held on 13-14 July 2000 at The Bull Hotel, Peterborough. Conference Briefing.
INSTITUTION	Careers Research and Advisory Centre, Cambridge (England).; National Inst. for Careers Education and Counselling, Cambridge (England).
SPONS AGENCY	Department for Education and Employment, London (England).
PUB DATE	2000-07-00
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge, CB3 0AX; Tel: 01223 460277; Fax: 01223 311708; E-mail: enquiries@crac.org.uk; Web site: http://www.crac.org.uk.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Articulation (Education); *Career Education; *Career Guidance; *Career Information Systems; Developed Nations; Disadvantaged; Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; *Government School Relationship; *Guidance Programs; Integrated Services; National Programs; Occupational Information; Partnerships in Education; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education; *Work Experience Programs; Youth; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Great Britain

ABSTRACT

The government is introducing a new, integrated support service, the Connexions Service, to provide information, advice, guidance, referral, and support for all young people aged 13-19 in England. Building on the Careers Service, its introduction should have significant implications for careers education and guidance (CEG) in schools. Currently, CEG has four components: a planned program of careers education in the curriculum; a full range of accurate and up-to-date career information; access to advice and guidance; and work experience. Careers services have been required to focus the provision of guidance on pupils with the greatest needs. A consensus view is that the gap between the best and the worst of practice had widened under focusing. These seven main themes emerge from working groups' discussions during a consultation on Connexions: communication; making connections: synergy not substitution (bringing coherence to a range of support services); engaging school senior managers and governors; clarifying roles; impact on CEG; is Connexions a service or a strategy? targeted or universal?; and Connexions as a long-term project. Students should expect the following of a universal Connexions: information, advice, and guidance; access to a network of support; equal opportunities; progress monitoring; tutorial support; impartial careers guidance; support for progression and transition; and advocacy support. Fifteen recommendations addressed mainly to the government have been made. (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

CRAC NICEC

Conference Briefing

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A.G. Watts

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 449 370

Implications of Connexions for Careers Education and Guidance in Schools

Report of a NICEC/CRAC invitational policy consultation held on 13-14 July 2000 at The Bull Hotel, Peterborough

sponsored by the Department for Education and Employment

DfEE

Department for Education and Employment

NICEC

The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling is a network organisation sponsored by CRAC. It conducts applied research and development work related to guidance in educational institutions and in work and community settings. Its aim is to develop theory, inform policy and enhance practice through staff development, organisation development, curriculum development, consultancy and research.

CRAC

The Careers Research and Advisory Centre is a registered educational charity and independent development agency founded in 1964. Its education and training programmes, publications and sponsored projects provide links between the worlds of education and employment.

Sheraton House, Castle Park,
Cambridge CB3 0AX
Tel: 01223-460277 Fax: 01223-311708
E-mail: enquiries@crac.org.uk

The Government is introducing a new, integrated support service, the Connexions Service, which will provide information, advice, guidance, referral and support for all young people aged 13-19 in England. Ministers have made it clear that it will be a universal service but that it will give particular priority to those at greatest risk of not continuing in learning. Pilots have started in 12 areas of the country and the new service will be phased in from April 2001. The Connexions Service will build on the work of the current Careers Service, including the recent work on focusing the provision of guidance on those most in need. Its introduction will have significant implications not only for careers education and guidance (CEG) in schools but also for other related aspects of schools' work.

The consultation reported here aimed to:

- examine the implications of the focusing agenda, the new Connexions Service and other current developments for CEG in schools;
- inform current policy discussions regarding the development of the Connexions Service;
- assist the development of DfEE-funded research to examine the ways in which CEG provision in schools is being re-designed in the light of the focusing agenda.

The consultation was designed at a strategic level, to inform and influence both the development and implementation of policy.

Included among the 32 participants were representatives of the DfEE, Ofsted, QCA, schools, careers services and research organisations. The main work of the event was conducted in working groups, participants having being briefed through specially commissioned papers. The consultation was chaired by Professor Tony Watts, Director of NICEC. This report records the main themes of the discussions and the recommendations made. It is written by David Andrews, NICEC Fellow. The report does not necessarily represent the views of the sponsors, nor of any particular participant at the event.

CE 062 319

Current arrangements for careers provision in schools

CEG in schools is concerned with helping pupils to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to make choices about their futures in learning and work, and to make successful transitions on to the next stages of education, training and employment. Programmes of CEG typically comprise four main components:

- a planned programme of careers education in the curriculum;
- a full range of accurate and up-to-date careers information;
- access to advice and guidance, linked to support for recording and reviewing achievement, setting targets and action planning;
- experience of work.

Such programmes are provided through a partnership between schools and the local careers service. Although schools will take a lead on planning and delivering the careers education, and careers services will provide much of the careers guidance, the partnership is often more flexible than this: careers advisers are involved in helping to plan and perhaps deliver some of the curriculum work; teachers undertake individual interviews with pupils, perhaps with the label of 'tutoring' or 'mentoring'; and many careers co-ordinators offer some careers guidance, particularly where the level of service from a careers adviser is low. The school and the careers service jointly plan and review the programme of careers work as a whole and document the outcome in the form of a partnership agreement.

The statutory basis for these arrangements is contained within the Education Act 1997, which places statutory duties on schools to provide a planned programme of careers education, to provide the careers service with access to pupils and information on pupils, and to provide careers information and guidance materials to pupils. This legislation, and the earlier legislation requiring the Secretary of State to provide careers guidance for all young people, still apply under the Connexions Service.

Over the past few years, and in particular over the last decade, all four components of CEG provision have become integrated into wider aspects of schools' work. *Careers education* is now seen as an integral part of a wider provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE) in the curriculum. This has been aided by the introduction of the DfEE/QCA non-statutory framework for PSHE which is concerned with helping pupils to prepare for the range of roles they will experience in life. Although the relationship between these curriculum areas has been recognised conceptually, schools differ in the extent to which the links have been implemented in practice. This development mirrors, at a curriculum level, what the Connexions Service is attempting to do at the level of individual support. It links, for example, sex education, drug education, careers education and financial capability. Links are also being established between careers education/PSHE and Citizenship, which is concerned with helping pupils to participate as active and responsible members of their communities.

Supported by the DfEE's careers library initiative managed through careers services, many schools have moved their *careers information* materials into main school resource centres, thereby improving access. There has also been an investment in more ICT-based sources of information on opportunities in learning and work.

Over recent years there has been a growth in the range of *individual support* provided to pupils in schools, through tutoring, recording achievement, target-setting and mentoring, together with educational guidance on options at 14+ and 16+. All these processes are inter-related. Many schools are recognising these links and are working to bring coherence to the various forms of individual support to pupils, including careers guidance provided by careers advisers. Use of Progress File is facilitating these developments.

Following the introduction of more vocational education in schools and the new disapplication arrangements, schools are now setting *work experience* into a broader provision of work-related learning.

The CEG programme in a school is co-ordinated, managed and led by a careers co-ordinator, who is line-managed by a member of the senior management team. This postholder needs to

work with other middle managers with related roles, in particular the PSHE co-ordinator and the Records of Achievement co-ordinator. Under the Code of Practice for Special Needs, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have individual education plans (IEPs), normally written by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The careers co-ordinator needs to work with the SENCO to ensure that the school's provision of CEG meets the needs of all pupils.

Guidance for individuals most in need: the impact of the focusing agenda

In every school there are pupils who are at risk of becoming disaffected or of becoming disengaged from learning. Although the careers teacher may provide additional support to these pupils, much of the support will be provided through the school's pastoral-care structures, particularly from heads of year. It is these postholders who liaise with other services and agencies where required.

For the past two or three years careers services have been required to focus the provision of guidance on pupils with the greatest needs. Few practitioners, in schools or in careers services, have challenged the principle and practice that the provision of guidance should be differentiated according to need. Where concerns have been expressed, they have been about ensuring that focusing resources on certain pupils does not result in an inadequate provision to others who have guidance needs, and about how such needs are identified. The first concern is largely about making effective use of the available guidance provision; the second is about the means adopted for defining who needs guidance most.

Discussions at the consultation event concluded that the focusing agenda had had both negative and positive effects. Both schools and careers services reported a significant reduction in careers adviser time in schools and, in particular, a lack of time available to talk to pupils who, although totally committed to continuing in learning, wanted help with deciding on the most appropriate options to follow. Concerns were expressed that some of these pupils might themselves drop out of learning at a later stage if they realised that they were not on the right course for them. It would be unfortunate, to say the least, if focusing were to lead to a new group of disaffected young people. It was also reported that there is professional haemorrhaging: careers advisers are leaving the profession, partly because of uncertainties about the future and partly because some careers advisers feel that the mainstream work for which they have been trained is being eroded. On the more positive side, the focusing agenda had:

- led to more flexible approaches to the provision of guidance;
- challenged the 'safety-net' view of the '40 mins. interview and action plan for all' approach;
- caused both teachers and careers advisers to think carefully about how best to identify need.

In some areas of the country schools and careers services have been able to move away from identifying priorities on the basis of *social* needs towards assessing *guidance* needs.

It became clear that focusing had resulted in a range of practices in different regions, and in different careers services within a region. Planning guidance asked careers services to analyse the needs in their localities, and to put forward plans for increasing the percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in learning, by both engaging those no longer in learning and ensuring that those in school progressed into continued learning, i.e. by providing both a targeted and a universal service. Different approaches to striking the balance between targeting and universality had led to a considerable degree of local diversity. In one sense this is welcome as services have been able to be responsive to local needs and circumstances, but it is possible that the arrangements could have been too loose. There was a consensus view that the gap between the best of practice and the worst of practice had widened under focusing. This raised an important question about how tight the management from the centre should be for the new Connexions Service.

Implications of the Connexions Service

A briefing paper prepared for the event identified several factors for participants to consider, including two which are worthy of being highlighted here.

Firstly, it is widely acknowledged that the partnership between the school and the Connexions

Service will be a broader partnership than that which currently exists between the school and the Careers Service. The latter is typically negotiated annually between the careers co-ordinator and the careers adviser. The new arrangements will need to include several other members of staff, notably heads of year, the SENCO and senior managers with responsibility for pastoral care.

Secondly, the Government's commitment to a universal, inclusive service will need to be manifest in practice from an early stage. If the Connexions Service is to be a success, it must be viewed as relevant to all young people: a service that appears to be for only those 'with problems' is unlikely to succeed.

From the discussions in the working groups, seven main themes emerged.

1 *Communications*

Schools will be central to the successful implementation of the Connexions Service, yet to date their role has received little attention in the various Connexions publications, and they have been sent only one short information note from the DfEE. It has been left to local careers services to communicate details to the initiative to schools. This approach lacks the force of a message from the DfEE and is open to the interpretation that Connexions is only a CEG matter. The introduction of the Connexions Service is a major development and merits a clear message from the DfEE direct to schools.

With regard to a communication strategy, it is not only schools which need to be informed of developments. Research indicates that parents have a major influence over young people's career decisions and where concerns about the negative effects of the focusing agenda have been expressed, parents have been among those who have put such concerns in writing. Any communications strategy about Connexions, therefore, should include the wider community, particularly parents.

2 *Making connections: synergy not substitution*

Connexions is not simply a replacement for the existing Careers Service: it represents an attempt to bring coherence to a range of support services. This development of services working with schools needs to be mirrored by schools taking a similarly holistic view to their work supporting pupils. At the level of individual support and guidance, this will involve taking a whole-school view of tutoring, mentoring, guidance and related activities such as reviewing progress, recording achievements and setting targets. At the curriculum level, it will involve developing an over-arching framework for all those elements of the curriculum which focus on preparing pupils for the range of life roles, i.e. careers education, PSHE, citizenship, key skills and work-related learning. The curriculum perspective may appear to represent a longer-term development, yet many schools are working on such developments as part of their preparation for the new curriculum. Certainly, at the level of individual support and guidance, schools need to see Connexions as an integrating framework.

This reinforces the need to communicate from the centre to senior managers in schools. At the school level, Connexions is not seen as an overarching framework: it tends to be viewed as yet another change being imposed upon them. Schools will need to be helped to see Connexions as bringing coherence to existing provision and as focusing support where it is needed most. This will not be an easy task as schools are being offered other over-arching frameworks at the same time. PSHE co-ordinators, for example, are being offered the National Healthy Schools initiative as a means of linking several of the aspects of schools' work with which Connexions overlaps.

3 *Engaging school senior managers and governors*

The Connexions Service does not relate only to the CEG programme in the school; it impacts on several other related areas of the school's work. The communications referred to above, therefore, need to be addressed to headteachers and governors. Furthermore, if Connexions is to be implemented successfully at the school level, it must be included in the school development plan. It will be essential that senior managers consider how they will prepare for the transition to the new arrangements, and how these developments will link to the school's

strategies for increasing participation in post-16 learning and raising achievement. As with all other elements of the school's development plan, governing bodies will need to give their approval to these developments, and to review this section of the plan as part of the review and development process. It follows, therefore, that governing bodies and headteachers need a clear message from the DfEE. This message needs to be communicated simultaneously to local education authority inspectors and advisers who visit schools regularly to monitor and assist schools' development plans.

4 *Clarifying roles*

An important element of the new Connexions Service will be a network of personal advisers (PAs). Both the role of the PA and the roles of those members of the school's staff with whom the PA will need to work will need to be made clear to all concerned.

Discussions in the working groups during the consultation revealed a lot of uncertainty about the role of a PA. Is the term personal adviser in a school context synonymous with the term 'learning mentor', or does a personal adviser have a wider role than a learning mentor? Is the PA a *generalist*, providing diagnostic guidance to all pupils, or a *specialist* providing intensive help only to pupils in the target group, or does she or he combine both roles? Is the PA someone who works solely with pupils, or can she or he act, from time to time, as a *consultant* to teachers in the school, assisting them in supporting pupils and in developing aspects of the careers education/PSHE curriculum (in a role similar to that undertaken by a SENCO in relation to helping classroom teachers with pupils with learning difficulties)? Does a school have access only to its PA or can it call upon several different PAs working on a local team, each with a different area of expertise?

All of these questions, and possibly more besides, are ones to which schools will want answers as they seek to assist with the implementation of Connexions. The question was also posed at the consultation about the extent to which personal advisers could represent a new and distinct profession when the role is seemingly so diverse. Several participants observed that the tasks to be undertaken by a school-based PA are very similar to those undertaken by a tutor or a head of year in a school. In this instance, therefore, would not the role of a PA be that of a sub-professional, as tutors and heads of year already have a professional role as a teacher?

While the role of PA is being clarified, it will be important to identify the complementary roles of others such as the careers co-ordinator, heads of year and SENCO as they relate to the work of the Connexions Service. These postholders in schools will then need in-service training to enable them to fulfil their (possibly modified) roles.

5 *Impact on CEG*

Although the consultation extended its debate to consider the wider implications of Connexions for schools, there was nevertheless some discussion on its specific impact on CEG.

One possible scenario is that there is a clearer role for CEG in the future. If Connexions is successful in bringing coherence to the personal support provided to young people, CEG could be a specialist service in the school:

- ensuring a planned programme of careers education for all;
- providing careers information via both paper-based and ICT-based materials;
- supplying careers guidance to pupils referred on from the PAs.

This could lead to a clearer role for the careers co-ordinator, with a clearer person specification, better recruitment and improved training.

An alternative scenario is that the role of careers co-ordinator could disappear. Careers education would become absorbed into a wider connective curriculum, while careers guidance would become absorbed into the wider provision of guidance from the Connexions Service. In this situation careers guidance could be in danger of becoming detached from labour market intelligence. This then brings into play another development that will impact on schools soon:

the introduction of education-business liaison organisations, with their remit for work experience and broader work-related learning.

Throughout the discussions two points became particularly clear. Firstly, schools will need a lot of help in developing an adequate provision of ICT-based work. Secondly, programmes of careers education will need to continue to help pupils develop the important career management skills of reviewing achievements and planning ahead, making effective use of careers information, and presenting self, but they will also need to include a new focus on helping pupils become discriminating users of guidance. In a world where guidance will be offered from a range of sources, pupils will need to be able to recognise when they need help, to know here they can seek help, to ask the right questions, and to weigh up the information, advice and guidance received.

6 *Service or strategy? Targeted or universal?*

Throughout the discussions about how Connexions might work at the school level, two tensions kept surfacing in the debates:

- between talking about Connexions as a *service*, providing integrated support and guidance to individuals, and talking about Connexions as a *strategy*, linking individual support and related aspects of curriculum;
- between Connexions as a *targeted* service or strategy, serving the needs of certain groups of pupils, and Connexions as a *universal* service or strategy, serving the needs of all.

When considering possible models for how Connexions might work in practice in schools, participants found it easier to talk about either a targeted service for pupils at risk, with the personal adviser supporting the young person, or a universal strategy for all pupils, with a senior management position seeking to co-ordinate all the guidance provision and the related aspects of curriculum. There was some discussion about wider strategies for the target group of pupils, with the conclusion that recent developments have consisted of very successful one-year projects that have then fallen once the initial funding has ended.

When participants attempted to look at a universal Connexions Service, barriers were presented, such as insufficient resources, uncommitted tutors, and a concern that certain components of existing provision might not be retained (e.g. the access, currently available through careers services, to specialist guidance on higher education choices). The working groups did, however, respond to Malcolm Wicks' invitation to the National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers conference to make suggestions about the content of a national statement of what a young person could expect from the Connexions Service. The recommendations on this appear later in this report.

7 *Connexions as a long-term project*

Ministers have said that the implementation of Connexions is a project that will be implemented over several years. It is a project which cuts across many aspects of a school's work and its links with the wider community. It is a Government initiative, with clearly articulated central principles, but with the intention of varying practice at the local level in order to respond to local needs and circumstances. As such Connexions exhibits several parallels with a previous major Government initiated development programme in schools – the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) – which ran from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.

The two share several features. TVEI started as a series of pilots, involving target groups of pupils, and then extended into a phased national but locally-delivered programme that involved all 14-19-year-old pupils. Like TVEI, Connexions will need to be managed by the DfEE as a national programme. It will require some elements of tight management from the centre (to avoid, for example, the excessive range of practice being experienced under the focusing agenda) with sufficient loose management at the local level to allow flexibility within the 47 Connexions Partnerships.

As with TVEI, the role of headteachers will be crucial to the successful implementation of Connexions. The experience of TVEI suggests that project-management training for senior managers in schools will be an important factor.

▼ Expectations of a universal Connexions Service

The working groups considered the possible content of a national statement of what a young person could expect from the Connexions Service. They proposed the following, bearing in mind that these statements about the Connexions Service would, in time, be linked to other statements of entitlement within the wider Connexions Strategy, e.g. statements concerning learning allowances and other financial matters.

It was proposed that all young people should expect:

- information, advice and guidance, from an identified individual, which will empower and enable them to participate effectively in learning, to fulfil their potential and to progress towards longer-term career goals;
- access to a network of support, on a range of issues;
- equality of opportunity, including an element of personal choice over their personal adviser;
- monitoring of their progress, and help at times when it is needed (within the bounds that the resources can support);
- continuity of PA support, particularly for the target group (within operational possibilities);
- pastoral and tutorial support within the school;
- diagnostic assessment of their learning and guidance needs;
- impartial careers guidance;
- support for progression and transition;
- advocacy support where required, including brokerage with education and training providers;
- a curriculum which develops self-help skills and includes good-quality careers education, taught by trained specialists.

It was suggested that if these expectations were to be delivered, existing service provision would need to be redesigned. Lines of demarcation would have to be broken down and all the professionals involved would need to work in new ways. Careers advisers would still be required, in order to provide specialist careers guidance, but they would need to operate in a broader way and to recognise their wider skills. All the professionals would need to focus on young people's needs above anything else and to work more flexibly. Structures would need to be changed to facilitate a greater a greater degree of partnership working, and attention would need to be given to the physical location of PAs: young people need access to help at the times when they require it and in places where they are.

The exciting potential of ICT was recognised, although it was pointed out that ICT does not remove the need for individuals to talk to someone. If the full potential of ICT is to be realised, packages need to be made more student-friendly, teachers and PAs need access to training in their use and there needs to be adequate investment in both hardware and software.

▼ Conclusions

At one level, the introduction of the Connexions Service can be seen as just another initiative impacting on schools, with PAs coming into schools and possibly leading to some changes to the CEG provision. At another level, the Connexions Strategy challenges some of the fundamental design features of secondary school education. If the full potential of this development is to be realised in practice, it needs to be acknowledged by all concerned that this is a big project. As one participant said: 'it is a marathon not a sprint'. But most marathons start with a sprint, and it will be vital to get the development off to a good start, particularly if Connexions is to be seen as a service for all, not just the few. The reason why practitioners are

raising so many questions is not because they are not committed to the idea: it is precisely because they do care that they want to get it right, for future generations of young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the final plenary session a number of recommendations were agreed. These are listed below, with indications of the organisations to which they are addressed. The fact that the majority are addressed to the Government and its agencies is simply a reflection of the current position with regard to the development of Connexions policy.

1 There should be a clear statement about the purpose of Connexions, in particular the balance and relationship between its role as a universal support service for learning and progression and its role as an initiative to tackle social exclusion; and about how it links to other agendas, e.g. raising achievement (the Government).

2 There should be a five-year development and implementation plan for the Connexions Service, and this should be communicated to, among others, headteachers and school governors (Connexions Service National Unit – CSNU).

3 All schools should be required to review their school development plans in the light of Connexions, and to indicate how they plan to implement the initiative at the school level (DfEE).

4 There should be measurable targets for the Connexions Service, including ones which can only be achieved by the Connexions Service and schools working together (CSNU).

5 The measures by which schools are held accountable should be extended beyond student achievement to include targets for progression, e.g. 100% progression to post-16 learning (DfEE).

6 Appropriate arrangements for the training of PAs and school staff with key roles within Connexions should be put in place, together with adequate funding (CSNU and DfEE).

7 Training and staff development programmes should be designed to include opportunities for the network of individuals involved to train together (Connexions Partnerships).

8 Evidence concerning the innovative practice emerging from focusing and from the Connexions pilots must be collected and disseminated effectively (CSNU).

9 The initial training of teachers should include work on tutoring skills and connective pedagogy (Teacher Training Agency – TTA).

10 The ICT in-service training for teachers should include a module on ICT in guidance and tutoring work (TTA).

11 Parents should be informed about the development of Connexions and its role in their children's learning (DfEE, Connexions Partnerships, schools).

12 Those aspects of the school curriculum which focus on preparing pupils for their roles in life, including learner and worker, (the 'connective' or 'role-related' curriculum) should be strengthened (DfEE, QCA).

13 The proposed graduation certificate should include recognition of pupils' achievements in relation to career management skills (DfEE, QCA).

14 Adequate funding should be made available for Connexions, and appropriate funding models should be designed to take account of differing needs of the target groups in different areas of the country (DfEE, CSNU).

15 As the Connexions Service is implemented, the emerging good practice should be show-cased and promoted (CSNU).